

Josh Peskowitz: From Fashion Director to Shopkeeper

Bloomingdales' outgoing fashion director has spent 20 years watching modern menswear boom. Now, he plans to use his experience across editorial and retail to launch a concept store in the fashion hotspot of LA.

LONDON, United Kingdom — With his curly mane and casual, considered style, Josh Peskowitz is an instantly recognisable figure in the global menswear industry. The outgoing men's fashion director of Bloomingdales has worked variously as both a stylist and a writer, and next year, along with two partners, he will become a retailer in his own right. Magasin will be a specialty retail store aimed at a well-informed American menswear consumer, located in The Platform, a new retail development in LA's Culver City.

The store will stock a number of under-the-radar, yet highly sought-after casual-**tailoring** and sportswear labels, including Massimo Alba, Salvator Piccolo, Ts(s), Engineered Garments, Feit and PT01. Shirts range in price between \$200-300, pants from \$300-400 and outerwear around a \$1,000 or less. "The store will be stocked like a full, interchangeable wardrobe — lots of unstructured tailoring, plays on proportion, plays on pattern — but it's about taking all those things and putting them together in a way that still feels like they're very polished," explains Peskowitz.

It is a segment of the market in which he and his partners, Christophe Desmaison and Simon Golby, have significant experience. Desmaison and Golby respectively own and work at the influential New York showroom CD Network, and Golby previously played a key role in bringing Sprezzatura- friendly Italian brands like **Brunello Cucinelli** and Boglioli to the United States.

"I think that the centre [of menswear] has really, really changed in the last 15 years. It used to be: these are the clothes that I wear when I go to work, this is what I change into when I get off of work. I don't think that exists anymore. There is a lot to be said for shopping in a way where you can walk into a store and intuitively all those things go together, as opposed to the way that many boutiques are set up now — by brand," he continues. "Particularly for someone who is interested in clothing and cares about quality and provenance; that is the person that has the biggest growth potential — the guy that you're going to be able to get to invest in this clothing and create a real sustainable business with," explains Peskowitz.

“I’ve been thinking about doing it since I was 16.”

The New York resident is well qualified to read the American menswear retail climate. At 36, his career in fashion proper spans 14 years. He spent the past four as fashion director of Bloomingdales, his most senior role to date, which he leaves this month, although he will continue to advise the retailer into the New Year.

As fashion director of one of the most storied names in American retail, Peskowitz is not in fact a member of the buying team at the department store group. Instead, he’s more like the in-house ‘nose’ for cool, keeping the team up to date with the most important trends, and directing the store’s aesthetic menswear strategy. “Fashion director is sort of an amorphous title, a very American thing; but it really is being that sponge. Whether it’s things that are happening in pop culture, music, art or geo-politics — it’s taking it all in through osmosis, trying to put together an informed opinion of what matters in terms of style, and for your customer,” Peskowitz tells BoF.

Talking to that diverse middle-class Bloomingdales customer, spread across 37 different store locations, was a challenge. “Different areas and different customer bases have different needs, so you need to be able to tailor that message. Retail is not an exact science, so you’re never going to be right 100 percent of the time, but if you’re right 60 percent of the time, you’re doing pretty damn good.”

An American Perspective

“I grew up at a time when menswear was just first beginning to happen,” says Peskowitz. Born in Brooklyn, but raised in Washington DC, as a teenager he worked “to be able to afford the clothes I wanted to buy,” which at the time was Polo [Ralph Lauren](#) polo shirts, Stussy, DKNY and sneakers. In 1994, aged 16, his first job was a merchandiser at a store called Up Against The Wall, —part of a chain of 21 boutiques, heavy on streetwear, which closed in 2010. It was one of the first stores to subvert American sportswear classics and turn them into streetwear.

Peskowitz attended college at the University of Delaware, where he majored in Fashion Merchandising. An avid consumer of The Face and The Fader magazines, Peskowitz ended up working at the latter, “sort of by accident,” while he was a student styling window displays for high-street retailer Urban Outfitters.

“I was a senior in college and I got a phone call from one of my closest friends, who was an intern in the photo department [at The Fader]. He was like: ‘Yo, I told the Fader staff that you are a stylist. They need help with a photoshoot.’ I was like: ‘Err, I’m not a stylist, I don’t know what to do.’ He said: ‘Dude, you put clothes on mannequins all day. It’s the same thing.’ I thought: Okay, I guess you’re right.” The budding stylist joined The Fader eight months after he graduated and soon found himself working at Urban Outfitters until 3pm, before heading over to the office of The Fader “until God knows when at night.”

Around that time, The Fader was acting as an incubator for New York talent including Will Welch (now style director at GQ), Alex Wagner (who now has a politics programme on NSNBC) and Phil Bicker (now at Instagram), among others. To Peskowitz's advantage, it was run with a skeleton staff and as he pitched ideas, he was offered commissions. "I'd say: 'I'm not a writer.' They'd say: 'Well, we've only got six people here so you're going to have to write it.' The editors were wonderful, and that's really how I first learnt how to write about clothes and editorially style them," he says.

Editorial Experience

Motivated by a desire "to actually be able to pay rent," in 2005 Peskowitz took a job at Cargo, a product heavy shopping magazine for men. There he worked under Miguel Enamorado, who is now the fashion director of Interview Magazine, and Bruce Pask, previously of the New York Times' T Magazine, who is now at [Bergdorf Goodman](#).

"Working with Bruce really taught me how to be a market editor. Cargo was much more service orientated: where could you buy this, how much does it cost, how does it fit into the stories that we are doing. Knowing the market and scouring the market [for labels] – all those kinds of things I learned working for Bruce," says Peskowitz.

Following Cargo, Peskowitz launched Esquire's Big Black Book in 2006 with Nick Sullivan and Wendell Brown, teaching him "a lot more about tailored clothing than I had ever wanted to know, while gaining extremely valuable experience being part of taking something that didn't exist and actually making it," he explains. Following his first stint at Esquire (he would return for 12 months in 2009), Peskowitz joined Men.Style.com as men's style editor, which would become GQ.com.

When he left Esquire for the second time, Peskowitz was hired by the Gilt Groupe to launch a men's retail website, "based on this idea of telling editorial stories, very specific advice driven things, and inspiration shoots, and then selling the clothes in the magazine", he explains. Although the site, Park & Bond, was "well received," according to Peskowitz, the group shuttered it "as part of its preparations for an IPO." "During that period, I really got to see the other side of business – the buying side which I'd never really had anything to do with. I had very little influence on what was sold, and it made me realise that what was lacking in my education up until that point was really rock solid retail experience."

Bloomingdales and Buying

“When Bloomingdales wanted me to come work here, I just thought it was going to be a really fabulous opportunity for me to work even closer with buyers, closer with the product... I was bringing an ability to tell stories with product, and my ability to discern what I thought the trends that our consumer would actually buy into, were going to be,” he says.

“One of the things that I thought was very important was to tell stories based on all categories of the business, not to just have a story that only reflected classic sportswear or the denim market. Menswear is different from women’s in that things don’t only last for a season,” continues Peskowitz.

Peskowitz is a firm believer in going into the five-week seasonal whirlwind of collections, across New York, London, Milan and Paris with a pre-agreed, but flexible, game plan. “You have to start off the season with a very distinct idea of what you want to do in terms of the stories that you want to tell. Then it really is about being able to communicate those ideas to the buying core, the marketing team, the people who do the floor sets and the people who do the window displays,” he explains.

Findings take the form of a trend document. “Usually those documents end up being directly correlated to the stories that we tell in our twice yearly catalogue, the Men’s Catalogue. And that’s really a jumping off point. A lot of that artwork ends up being utilised on Bloomingdales.com, the floor set, in window displays – at least at concept [stages],” says Peskowitz. “The people that I work with here at Bloomingdales are world class. I love them and I’ve learned a lot from them. This experience has allowed me to take the next step.”

With the opening of Magasin, his independent venture, Peskowitz is palpably excited and with a decade at the forefront of men’s fashion, his enthusiasm for the product hasn’t waned. “I’ve never really done anything else...The joy of making dope shit is something that – pardon my language – is a privilege.”